



WAYLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS GOAL 1 - RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

The Wayland Public Schools have engaged in a systematic process to review the district’s needs and create goals and initiatives to improve teaching and learning. On October 11, 2011, School Superintendent Dr. Paul Stein presented six priority areas which were subsequently approved by the School Committee as the district-wide goals for the 2011-2012 school year. This document is designed to provide an overview of the progress-to-date on implementation of the first of these goals: “To implement a system-wide integrated RTI program in a teaching and learning environment that includes teacher collaboration, sharing of best practices, differentiated instruction, and the use of data to inform instruction.”

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a nationwide movement that provides a multi-step approach for systematic and routine interventions for all students. Teachers and staff plan and deliver instruction informed by best practices, along with early and intensive interventions to students. The use of data to assess students’ needs and monitor progress is a critical component of RTI. This initiative shifts the responsibility for students from specialized teachers to the entire staff at a grade, department, or building level.

At the beginning of the school year, the elementary, middle, and high school teachers and administrators assessed the needs of the students at each of these levels. Through the lens of the RTI model, they then created goals and indicators to improve student achievement, which translated the district-wide goals to school improvement plans. In this report, using a strategic analysis tool, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) for each indicator were evaluated.

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WAYLAND HIGH SCHOOL RTI INITIATIVE

WHS1: 9th Grade RTI Structured Support Program

Timetable: In place; monitored quarterly

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>This program eases the transition from middle school to high school by adding structure to the freshmen schedules (they are in study hall rather than using/abusing free blocks). Because they need to prove that they are ready to enjoy freedom and independence via their grades, most freshmen are motivated to do well academically. The program effectively communicates the value we place on both earned privileges and high effort. Students in study hall receive targeted intervention via additional Tier 1 support (Academic Center, meetings with teachers, etc.). Overall, we believe we have fewer freshmen failing to meet our C-bar this year than in past years (still accruing data).</p>	<p>We have not reached consensus on whether a C- is too low a standard. Also, some students who have reached third quarter and are still in study hall are frustrated and/or feeling defeated while their peers enjoy the freedom of high school. There is a perceived punitive, exclusionary edge to this program. We still need to strengthen and define the kind of intervention students receive while in study hall (lining up teachers and support); some students are not using their study hall time well due to lack of motivation or because they don't know how. We need to diversify our approach for students in the "won't" category.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>We have the opportunity here to motivate students to seek and receive extra support exactly where they need it. We can systematize our beliefs that with support all students can succeed, and that it is our responsibility to determine and offer that support. We can make more efficient the focused intervention that many teachers give their students anyhow (students work with other teachers, not just their own). We can target support so students and their families do not view an IEP as the only route to this kind of intervention. We can better distinguish the "can'ts" from the "won'ts."</p>	<p>We are constrained by space and the unwieldiness of first-quarter study halls. Depending on the period, study halls can be 80-90 students and dominate our lecture hall when other teachers may want to use that teaching space. It takes a vast amount of time to analyze quarter grades and dispatch resources; where does this time come from? The threat of social exclusion and defeatism weighs heavily on us, especially because some students still in study hall are working extremely hard with support and still not hitting the C-. Some believe that C- is not a high enough standard and mars the intent of the program. Some believe that sophomores as well should be in a structured program such as this; resources?</p>

WAYLAND HIGH SCHOOL RTI INITIATIVE

WHS2: RTI Pilot Program in English Department

Timetable: Already in place; develop measures

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Freshmen identified through the Lit Boost program at the middle school, as well as some subsequently recommended sophomores, receive intensive and regular 1:1 support from two English teachers, the Academic Center director, or our METCO Coordinator, depending on the nature of their needs. A gradual “release” approach ensures that students don’t falter when the support eases up. The focus is on daily assignments and assessments, organization, and targeted skills-building. This multi-pronged approach eases the transition to high school. The program involves a high level of communication between RTI teacher(s) and classroom teachers, as well as a strong bridge between the middle school (Ellen Jacobs) and the high school (Martha Gowetski). Martha is building a repertoire of both RTI models as well as “curricula” to be used for helping students build various skills (vocabulary, reading comprehension, reading stamina, etc.).</p>	<p>With four adults helping 12-15 students, the impact is incredibly high but the scope is low. We are looking at ways of supporting more students with the same resources, knowing that we may sacrifice the intensive level of intervention. We had to reshape the “Reading Circle” component of our program (the continuation of Lit Boost) because students did not have buy-in and felt their time could be better spent on the crush of daily assignments. Martha has not had time to support English teachers in their interventions with students. Most importantly, we have no “universal assessment” for both entry and release from the program.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>We have the opportunity here to strengthen students’ ELA skills early-on as they make the leap from middle school to high school. Students make an extra connection with another adult on campus. Support for students who were in the Lit Boost program, often for three years, is sustained. Teachers can develop more Tier 1 intervention approaches through their work with students in the program and the teachers who support them.</p>	<p>We are constrained by Martha’s time (funding). She is extremely efficient and generous with her time, but 0.5 FTE means she is limited to working with a finite number of students. We need to sustain professional development in this area or we will lose buy-in and momentum.</p>

WAYLAND HIGH SCHOOL RTI INITIATIVE

WHS3: School-wide Tier I Pilots

Timetable: Begin May 2012

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>When all teachers are well-versed in Tier 1 interventions, students are more likely to succeed academically. Incorporating these interventions into common and current practice makes learning more accessible for everyone. Students will not have to seek “extra support” from other resources (IEP, 504, Academic Center) because the support will be built into their regular classrooms. This does not require additional staffing in each department (but requires RTI “experts” who can support teachers in their efforts). This strategy is not a huge departure from what our teachers are already doing.</p>	<p>We have every confidence that all of our teachers can learn how to effectively incorporate Tier 1 interventions in their classrooms. However, without effective and strategic professional development about RTI in general, our efforts will be inconsistent or will fall flat. When incorporated well and deliberately, Tier 1 interventions can be (perceived as) time-consuming and inefficient (especially when a teacher has 100+ students).</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>We have the opportunity here to build additional supports organically within each regular education classroom so that all students, whether they are faltering or not, will not fall through the cracks. Most of these skills and interventions are already in use (they are considered “good teaching”), so it is an opportunity to praise and elevate the good work teachers already do. It could be a fairly non-threatening approach to improved teaching and learning. We also have an opportunity to look carefully at the way we assess students, which has been an ongoing yet sporadic conversation.</p>	<p>Effective professional development requires time, funding, and follow-through. With multiple initiatives occurring at once, we are mindful of overwhelming our teachers and overdrawing our time and resources. One of the more controversial Tier 1 interventions we’ve identified, extra time on assignments and assessments, is met with some opposition from teachers. We need to bridge that with more education and professional development. If done well, we will need more staffing in order to support our teachers in their RTI efforts. (We currently have 0.6 FTE in English; this allocation in each academic department would better ensure success in this effort.)</p>

WAYLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL RTI INITIATIVE

WMS1: Build Understanding and Consensus

Timetable: Complete by June 2012

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>A group of 13 teachers and administrators from the middle school attended last summer's 2-day RTI Institute led by Austin Buffum and followed up with two summer work days. Participants had time to talk through the theory of RTI and create initial buy-in to RTI and brainstorm ideas of how to proceed. Faculty meetings have been held during the year to develop a common understanding of the language and principles of RTI. Many are embracing this idea.</p>	<p>Only 13 staff members were formally trained during the 2011 summer, and even they report feeling on somewhat shaky ground with understanding all of the components of effective RTI and supporting others to make sense of it. All middle school staff will not be trained by RTI specialists by the end of the 2012 summer. While a lot of effort has been put forth to establish priorities and lead the charge, we are not experts in the field. Despite best efforts to simplify RTI to its essential theoretical components and logistical steps (with handouts of our collective roadmap), it still feels complex and overwhelming to many people.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>More faculty are interested in attending this year's summer institute, and many of those who attended last year hope for an opportunity to build on what they learned last summer. RTI opens the door to true differentiation. It has forced/allowed the staff to question the status quo, exploring conversations around topics like homework, grading, and leveled courses.</p>	<p>To do well, significant professional development is necessary in areas such as differentiating Tier 1 pedagogy effectively; implementing universal screenings; creating common formative assessments; collecting, interpreting and using data to inform instruction; and devising effective interventions to provide requisite support to students. As the work moves forward, care must be taken to keep our priorities in balance. RTI and academic needs must go hand in hand with work in the affective domain – such as fostering BERT, building resilience, and nurturing caring relationships.</p>

WAYLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL RTI INITIATIVE

WMS2: Define Essential Skills

Timetable: Complete by June 2012

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>RTI keeps us honest about what's truly essential. Defining the essentials by grade level is a concrete (though not easy) first step in our RTI process. The work has not only prepared us for the RTI model but helps us to prioritize within the curriculum. While some grade level/subject area teacher teams enter the process in synch, others have been far from aligned. Therefore, defining the essentials has forced us to work toward planning for a more consistent experience of content and skill development for students. As we hone our priorities, we aim to teach fewer things (that are most important) in greater depth with meaningful applications.</p>	<p>There is variability in teachers' skills and in their comfort in working together as grade level/subject area teams, making it harder to collaborate around the essentials. Additionally, not everyone's pedagogy is developed to a place where they are able to truly differentiate effectively, as some teachers are either new to the profession or new to WMS.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Additionally, we are using the work as an opportunity to begin to explore how all students can develop the essential technological skills through consistent content-area projects.</p>	<p>We know that many people fear change and will resist it just because it's new and different.</p>

WAYLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL RTI INITIATIVE

WMS3: Rethink the Master Schedule

Timetable: Complete by June 2012

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>RTI will be as good as our ability to create a new schedule that can accommodate it. We have convened a representative team of teachers from across the disciplines to look at the master schedule for 2013-2014. Our charge is to find creative ways to identify common planning time for grade level/subject area teams (while preserving the cluster model) and create flexible times for level 2 interventions so students can receive targeted help when they have not demonstrated proficiency in the essentials.</p>	<p>We don't, as yet, have a schedule that allows us to implement RTI. As we look to make changes, we may bump up against contractual hurdles due to changes in working conditions. While staggered start times for teachers would allow for a longer school day in which we could better meet students' academic needs, transportation challenges impede some of these creative scheduling options.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>In doing so, we are reconsidering study hall, how we schedule performing music groups, and how we deliver special education services. We also hope to collapse the lunches to occur over 1.5 hours rather than 3 hours – without creating a split class. Lots of great ideas are flowing.</p>	<p>Budget constraints may limit models for RTI scheduling that would require additional staffing.</p>

WAYLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL RTI INITIATIVE

WMS4: Revise District-wide Accommodation Plan

Timetable: Begin by February 2012

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats
<p>The Middle School has submitted a first draft to Dr. Dodyk for review as part of the district-wide plan to review the DCAP this summer. More educators will be engaged in the revision process.</p>	<p>This work has not been our top priority in the past. To be successful, there needs to be more collaboration with regular education teachers; perhaps through summer work this can be achieved and rolled out with the full faculty in the fall.</p>
<p>Having an authentic accommodation plan is a good opportunity to make explicit best practices that we can and should be offering all students.</p>	<p>The number of projects that have been identified for summer work is extensive and may limit the number of days and participants for the different projects.</p>

WAYLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL RTI INITIATIVE

WMS5: Pilot RTI Initiatives

Timetable: Begin Fall 2011

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Through the 8th grade RTI Math FLEX we maintained a designated time once a week where one 8th math teacher offered targeted math support to 7th and 8th graders without having to supervise a homeroom full of students. Primarily her students were the ones who attended. It has been effective, and the support has led to one student moving from a D- to a C+. Sixth grade pilots included: Good Friend Program – to support students who were known to struggle making connections, Mandatory Study Club – closer monitoring in study (three times per study check-ins for students who have fallen behind on HW), and FLEX Groups – self starters in larger groups while smaller groups of 5-9 got support with organizing and prioritizing in smaller groups.</p>	<p>We did not prioritize measuring effectiveness of these interventions in a systematic way beyond anecdotal data.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Piloting different models will inform the faculty of the benefits of the different initiatives as future plans are considered. It also builds a positive culture to support students in different ways.</p>	<p>Developing a systematic structure can be diluted by many unconnected pilots.</p>

WAYLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS RTI INITIATIVE

WES1: Establish ELA RTI Blocks Grades K-5

Timetable: Begin Fall 2011

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>All three schools were able establish RTI blocks two to three times per week for the first time this school year. This allows students to receive developmentally appropriate literacy instruction that meets their learning needs in a small group structure. The schools have become true professional learning communities in that classroom teachers, special education teachers, reading specialists, and teaching assistants provide directed, focused instruction across classrooms in each grade level.</p>	<p>Finding the time five days per week with the appropriate staffing in the true RTI model presents a significant challenge.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>We have been able to look at how we can maximize the strengths of the staff to meet the explicit learning needs of the students as they work together in a classroom setting.</p>	<p>Parents and teachers may be concerned that students are being over-assessed which may be taking away from authentic learning and instructional time.</p>

WAYLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS RTI INITIATIVE

WES2: Establish Consistent PLC Meetings K-5

Timetable: Begin Fall 2011

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>We have been able to establish consistent hour-long, weekly PLC meetings to discuss data from assessments and develop flexible grouping to meet the specific learning needs of all students.</p>	<p>In the second year of PLC meetings, the norms and roles need to be more firmly established.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Teachers are able to use dedicated planning time to collectively discuss how to analyze various sources of data to instruct students across the grade level.</p>	<p>Classroom teachers are out of their rooms forty-five minutes per week for the PLC meetings, which may be perceived as an ineffective trade off of time.</p>

WAYLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS RTI INITIATIVE

WES3: Administer Math Benchmark Assessments (GMADE) Twice a Year

Timetable: Begin Fall 2011

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats
<p>We were able to administer GMADE assessments to all students, and teachers were able to utilize the results to inform instruction. The format of the assessment was similar to the MCAS, which we expect will help students build proficiency in test-taking skills.</p>	<p>In our pilot year, the GMADE assessments took a significant amount of time to administer. This weakness will be mitigated in the future as we build capacity in administration of the assessment.</p>
<p>The results have given teachers the ability to use a norm-referenced assessment to measure student growth across grade levels. It has also been very helpful to have the data during parent-teacher conferences.</p>	<p>In the pilot year, we have not seen a threat to this goal.</p>

WAYLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS RTI INITIATIVE

WES4: Examine Schedule to Determine Best Ways to Implement RTI Block in Math

Timetable: Begin Spring 2012

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>As an elementary school administration team, we have created a 2012-2013 blueprint schedule that allows for ELA and Math RTI blocks that will be manageable for the teachers and help target specific areas of growth of students across curricular areas.</p>	<p>This is a significant change from past practice and may have impacts on other programs because of the shift in priorities. For example, the amount of time devoted exclusively to science and social studies will decrease significantly.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>This model will promote the integration of science and social studies into language arts and mathematics.</p>	<p>The music teachers' schedules may not allow for all students to participate in all RTI blocks in grades 3-5. Kindergarten teachers may have to significantly transform their schedule which could result in a belief that the curriculum is overly-academic and less developmental.</p>

WAYLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS RTI INITIATIVE

WES5: Identify Math Skills Across the Continuum From Essential Skills to Enrichment

Timetable: Begin Summer 2012

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Grade level teachers will understand the specific mathematics concepts which are essential to the mathematical skill development of the students at each grade level.</p>	<p>There would be less freedom for teacher-created units outside of the essential skills.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>This model increases the opportunity for teachers to collaborate to provide authentic instruction to maximize mathematical learning across the grade levels. There will also be more enrichment opportunities for higher-level students.</p>	<p>There are no known threats to this goal.</p>